

Charlotte Silver Goldstein

{ Charlotte responded to our Chicken House Project questionnaire in 1989. The following is taken from that questionnaire and later interviews. Charlotte lives with her husband at 500 Orchard Lane, Penngrove, Ca 94951. Maxine Kortum Durney, September 1994}.

My father was Nathan Silver, and my mother was known as Ali. Her maiden name was Yehoved Bragar. Yehoved was the name of the woman who was Moses' wet-nurse, Moses who parted the waters of the Red Sea.

My father was from Kiev, and was in the Revolution, fighting with democratic troupes, but lost to the Bolsheviks. Hunted, he escaped, hid, and fled, and in Bessarabia met my mother. Bessarabia, [a former province in Eastern Romania] was part of Russia, and there members of my mother's family were victims of the pogroms. Very religious people bowed their heads to the terror, and that's why my father could not accept religion.

They were married there, and she left home to come with him, his sisters, father and mother to New York. I was born on Ellis Island. My mother was nineteen.

Father got work in an umbrella factory. Six years later, he suffered what today would be termed as emotional trauma and needed a "quieter" life. They came to Cotati where his sister, Buta Kushnir, and her husband, had come in order to learn the chicken business, to teach it in Palestine. Buta and her husband eventually went there to live on a primitive kibbutz.

My father borrowed money to buy five acres on Woodward Avenue in Penngrove, and moved there in 1928 or '29.

At about the time that Roosevelt came in, my father had to sell the poultry. I remember the sheriff came and sat on our place so that when we sold, the money was collected for the feed supplier and the hatchery.

It was routine, it was not a matter of running out. My parents were not intimidated. I was old enough to know what was going on, and I was not afraid. When I came home from school, I talked to the sheriff's deputy.

My parent's didn't feel fear or resentment. You must remember where they came from, all that they had been through in Russia.



My father then went out and worked. He sold rice hulls, and hay, and he bought and sold hens. He had a chicken dressing plant, and sold dressed chickens to accounts mostly in San Francisco.

He purchased an old typewriter which I learned to use to do his business papers. I was about 12. I sometimes went with my father when he delivered hens he bought and sold. I sometimes drove truck for him.

My parents sometimes spoke the language of the home country, Yiddish, to each other, but not to my brother and me except at times. They wanted us to learn English and as a result my mother and I learned to read English together.

She took me to the library, introduced me to Grimm; brought me and my brother in for Saturday story hour.

My parents thought that education was where freedom lay.

My father taught us to love this country. I remember their going to night school and getting their citizenship papers, how proud they were.

They went out of business in 1958 or '59. It was no longer feasible to make a living wage because of competition from the South and Midwest where the feed companies were subsidizing the growing of fryers, or were actually in the business of fryers. The market price for chickens in this area was the same that you could buy dressed chickens for in the market.